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Family Guide to Kindergarten Readiness Standards

Office of Early Childhood Education

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Introduction

Understanding these “Kindergarten Readiness Standards” is an important first step in supporting your young child throughout his/her entire school experience. This guide focuses on what children, ages three to five, in preschool or prekindergarten programs * should know and be able to do by the time they enter Kindergarten.

The standards or learning criteria are organized into several domains. For children ages three to five, the categories are: Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development including Health and Safety, Language and Literacy, Mathematical Thinking, Scientific Inquiry, Social Studies, and Creative Arts.

To begin, it is important to know that each child learns at a different pace. Each child also has strengths and areas that are more challenging. Knowing your child as a learner is an important way to support his/her success in school. For example, some children may start preschool interested in books or writing and drawing, while others know how to play well with another child and follow routines. Using the standards can help you and your child’s teacher figure out which skills are strengths for your child and which areas you can partner to focus on before entering Kindergarten.

The guide has the following parts:

- A description of each learning category or domain, with examples of what your child should be learning and some ways your child might be learning these skills or behaviors in school.
- Suggestions for activities that you can do with your child at home that build on the things he/she is learning in school. The activities in each section can build skills in many of the different areas of development.
- Advice for how to talk with your child’s teacher about the different learning domains and how your child is progressing through them.

Kindergarten Readiness Standards

Approaches to Learning

This domain focuses on the way children think about school and their excitement about learning—described as their “approaches to learning.” In preschool, children will begin to understand why learning is important and that learning can take place in different ways. Not only can your child learn by looking in a book, but he/she can learn through playing with others, following directions, and doing things for himself or herself. Children also start to learn and use skills in preschool like curiosity, problem solving, following directions, being independent, and working with others.

During pre-K, your child will be learning how to:

- Show excitement.
- Complete a project or a task. For example, when a teacher asks a child to get some blocks and make a shape, he/she can follow directions and finish the task.
- Use problem-solving skills and follow directions.

* In this guide, the terms preschool or prekindergarten are used interchangeably to refer to three to five year old children, enrolled in early childhood programs prior to Kindergarten. Note that children in preschool have the same standards and are expected to make progress toward these standards during the three year old year, but not master them until after the four year old program.

- Be self-directed and show signs of independence.

Activities you can do at home to help your child be excited about learning:

- Invite your child to participate in everyday projects with you, like cooking dinner or doing the laundry.
- During activities, create small problems for your child to solve. For example, say “I can’t seem to find my keys. Where do you think we could look for them?”

Social and Emotional Development

This domain focuses on how children learn skills to be social with others. During the preschool years, children are learning which behaviors and actions are acceptable and which are not. They learn how to interact with other children in many settings, such as in the classroom, on the playground or during small group play. Children make friends. At the same time, children become more aware of who they are and what makes them different and similar to other children.

During pre-K, your child will be learning how to:

- Understand that he/she is an individual and is different from other children.
- Talk about himself, his/her family, and his/her community. For example, he/she can look at a family photo and describe who the people are.
- Be able to control his/her actions.
- Express emotions and recognize what different emotions look like. For example, when he/she sees a child crying, he/she can identify the emotion as “being upset.”
- Be able to follow rules in a classroom or other environment.
- Interact and play with others in a positive way. This may involve sharing a toy or working on a puzzle with another child.
- Explore new situations and become more resilient, or be able to bounce back in difficult situations.

Activities you can do at home to promote positive social and emotional development:

- Sit in front of a mirror with your child and make silly faces. Next time, try playing a game where you make mad, sad, happy, disappointed, embarrassed and other faces and label the feelings with your child.
- When you wake up your child in the morning, let him/her pick out the clothes he/she wants to wear. This can help encourage him/her to make independent choices.[†]

Physical Development, Health, and Safety

This domain focuses on how children’s bodies grow and develop. During the preschool years, children learn how to use the big muscles in their legs and arms (“gross motor skills”) and the small muscles in their hands and feet (“fine motor skills”). Children also become more responsible for taking care of themselves. When children get better at controlling and using their bodies, they sometimes also become more comfortable trying new things in the classroom, at home, and other settings.

[†] Adapted from Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social and Emotional Manual

During pre-K, your child will be learning how to:

- Move his/her body with control, balance and coordination. Examples of gross motor skills include running, jumping, kicking, throwing, catching, and climbing.
- Control his/her hands, fingers, and wrists in a way that show that he/she has hand-eye coordination and control. Examples of fine motor skills include using scissors, holding pencils and painting.
- Use his/her five senses to help with navigation.
- Keep himself/herself safe and healthy. For example, look before crossing the street or cover his/her mouth when he/she coughs.
- Practice personal hygiene tasks by himself/herself, such as washing hands and brushing teeth.
- Understand that some foods are good for his/her body, and others are bad.

Activities you can do at home to promote positive physical development, health and safety practices:

- Encourage your child to engage in activities in which he uses his hands and fingers such as, stringing cheerios onto a necklace before eating it, “writing” a shopping list before you go to the grocery store, and drawing pictures of your family.
- Help your child pay close attention to his/her senses. Close your eyes together and listen closely to identify the sounds outside (“I hear a car honking and a dog barking!”). Play “I SPY” and describe things that you see in the room. When you eat together, use words that describe what you taste (“This is salty and spicy”).

Language and Literacy

This domain focuses on three different areas of learning in language and literacy: Listening and Speaking, Reading and Writing. During the preschool years, children learn how to tell other people about their ideas and feelings using language. This includes talking to classmates, friends, teachers, family members and other people young children might meet in their community. Having these communication skills can help children create new bonds with other people, and express their thoughts, feelings and opinions. In addition, children learn more about books and stories. They explore how books and stories are used in the world. Children will also start to learn about letters and that letters are used to make up words. Language and literacy skills that are taught in PreKindergarten lay a foundation for the reading, writing, and communication skills that children learn in later grades.

During pre-K, your child will be learning how to:

- Understand directions and follow spoken directions.
- Tell the difference between different sounds of letters and sounds. He/she might also be able to hear the different syllables, or sections, in a word.
- Identify that some words rhyme and sound alike. For example, he/she could recognize that “three” and “tree” end with the same sound.
- Ask and answer questions for different reasons when asked by adults or other children.
- Learn new words and be able to use those new words when he/she talks.
- Have a back-and-forth conversation with adults and other children. For example, he/she can talk with the teacher about a class trip and ask when the class is going to go on another trip.
- Understand what books and other printed materials are and how they are used such as, knowing how to hold a book the right way and that information can be found in books.
- Say the names of some letters, such as the letters that make up his/her name or letters in familiar words, and also understand that certain letters make certain sounds.
- Understand that writing can be used for different purposes.

- Begin to write letters, especially writing his/her name. Children can also try to write other words to explain what they are thinking. For example, a child may write down what he/she drew in a picture.

Language and literacy activities you can do at home with your child:

- Help build your child's vocabulary while you are doing errands. When you take your child to the grocery store, point out words he/she might not know. Children learn and remember words better when they are in the setting where the words are used, rather than on a flashcard. Practice saying the new words and using them in sentences to help your child become more used to saying new words.
- After your child has drawn a picture, see if he/she wants to tell you about it. Try writing down what they say on the bottom of the paper. By writing down what your child said, you are modeling what it looks like to write. Children learn from watching adults write and write correctly.

Mathematical Thinking

This domain focuses on the development of basic math skills that serve as the basis for building higher level math skills as children get older. Early math skills help children make sense of and organize the world around them. Children are introduced to the concepts of numbers and counting and how these concepts are used everyday. This includes concepts of numerical order, recognizing different shapes and sizes, as well as concepts of measurement and patterns.

During pre-K, your child will be learning how to:

- Understand that numbers are different than letters and how numbers relate to each other.
- Use numbers to count and to identify quantity, such as counting how many blocks were used in building a house.
- Recognize and copy patterns, such as patterns of clapping and stomping or patterns of different colors.
- Use basic tools to measure and describe how big or small, how long or short, and how heavy or light an object is.
- Distinguish between different shapes, such as picking out a circle that is drawn on a page of squares.
- Use questions to gather information and organize the information collected. For example, a child might ask his/her classmates what their favorite kind of apple is and then make a chart or graph showing how many people like red, yellow, and green apples.
- Understand concepts of time and order.

Mathematical Thinking activities you can do at home:

- Try using food to help practice counting and sorting with your child by using different colored cereals or grapes. Help your child sort the objects into piles of different color cereal or grapes. Then count how many objects are in each pile.
- Try pointing out different shapes or signs and in nature next time you and your child go somewhere. Children learn better when they see shapes in "real life" rather than just drawn on a piece of paper.

Science

This domain focuses on how children explore and try out new ideas, which serves as the basis for early science skills. Children should be encouraged to try things out and see what happens. This may be focused on figuring out how something works, investigating why an object works the way it does, or

making a prediction about an event. Children learn how to observe and describe things in nature, such as plants, animals, and weather; these concepts include earth, physical and life science.

During pre-K, your child will be learning how to:

- Use inquiry and process skills, such as asking questions, making predictions or guesses, collecting information, making conclusions and explaining their reasoning.
- Understand how objects are used and what they are made of, such as describing the uses of paper and how paper feels and looks.
- Develop an understanding of living things and what they need to survive, such as plants, animals, other people, the earth and nature.

Science activities you can do at home:

- The next time your child eats an apple or another fruit, save the seeds. Using a small cup with dirt in it, help your child bury the seed. Have your child water the seed and watch it grow. Talk about the progress of the plant as it grows.
- Together, notice the weather around you and predict what you think will happen in the weather. You can make observations with your child like, “It feels colder than it did yesterday. It is so cold that I wonder if it will snow. I think it may snow tomorrow!”

Social Studies

This domain focuses on how children learn about their communities. During the preschool years, social studies supports children in learning about people, jobs, places, and cultures that make up their school community, home community, and other places they might go. It is here when children start to learn that people are different and develop a strong sense of his/her identity. By learning about their own community, children also learn about how they fit into and contribute to the classroom. Social studies in PreKindergarten also introduces children to very basic concepts of geography, or how the world is organized, and the role of government.

During pre-K, your child will be learning how to:

- Have a sense of self within the context of a family.
- Have a sense of self within the context of a community, such as at school.
- Notice and talk about diversity among people. For example, he/she talks about how people are different genders, races and cultures, speak different languages and have different abilities.
- Understand basic concepts of money and economy, such as talking about different jobs and transportation.
- Understand how people and things change over time.
- Demonstrate an understanding of basic geographic concepts including things in nature such as rivers and mountains or addresses and neighborhoods.
- Comprehend basic ideas of government and democracy, such as sharing and working together, making choices, following rules and understanding why rules are made.

Social Studies activities you can do at home:

- In order to promote a strong sense of identity, encourage your child to look in the mirror and notice his/her features, like skin tone, eye color, and hair texture. Then, provide him/her with crayons that match his/her skin tone and have him/her draw himself/herself and your family.
- Walking around your neighborhood helps children learn about their community. Talk about the local businesses. Find out what they sell and how they contribute to the community. Point out the schools, playgrounds, drugstores, firehouses, police stations, hospitals, and other buildings that are part of the community.

Creative Arts

This domain focuses on the ways in which children learn how to express themselves. Art allows children to design, create and explore their own ideas. This can be through hands-on activities such as painting, drawing, and building or through movement such as dancing, acting, clapping and signing. These activities encourage children to express themselves in ways other than talking and telling stories. Some creative arts can also help the development of gross and fine motor skills. Dramatic play or acting out a story helps children learn how to interact with their peers socially and emotionally as well.

During pre-K, your child will be learning how to:

- Move his/her body to express emotions and follow rhythms.
- Use pretend play to express things he/she has experienced or wants to experience.
- Use different forms of art materials such as paint and dough to make paintings and models.
- Express himself/herself through music, such as singing with a group in a morning meeting at school.

Creative Art activities you can do at home:

- Art activities for young children should focus on exploring materials and representing what he/she sees. Provide “scrap materials” such as packing material, old magazines and newspapers, paper towel rolls, and other household items, and give your child an idea, like “Can you make a tree like the one at the playground?”
- Play music with your child and dance together, stopping the music often and having your child “freeze” each time the music stops.
- Encourage your child to teach you the songs that he/she sings at school. You can sing them together and add words that have special meaning for your family.

Communicating with Your Child’s Teacher

How to talk to your child’s teacher about your child’s development

Talking to your child’s teacher is an important way to learn about your child’s development in all of the Kindergarten Readiness Standards. Both you and your child’s teacher will have a lot to share during these conversations. You are your child’s first and most important teacher and sharing your child’s strengths and weaknesses can be beneficial for how teachers interact with your child.

Specific opportunities for communication

In DCPS, there are several systems in place that will give you a better understanding of how your child is progressing in several developmental areas and goals:

Transition Week

We are instituting an “Early Childhood Transition Week” for all children attending a pre-school or pre-K class in DCPS during the 2010-11 school year. This means different children start on different days, enabling us more time to get to know each of your children and better plan their instruction. If your child’s last name starts with the letters A-K, you should bring him/her on Monday and Tuesday, August 23rd and 24th. If your child’s last name starts with L-Z, you should bring him/her in on Wednesday and Thursday, August 25th and 26th. All children attend on Friday, August 27th and every school day after that.

Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment

Your child’s teacher will be conducting classroom/individual observations and taking anecdotal notes regarding your child using the GOLD Assessment. This assessment helps the teacher plan lessons, experiences and explorations based on what is happening in the learning environment. Its objectives also guide teachers in creating a “Summary of Development & Learning,” which you will have the chance to discuss at DCPS parent-teacher conferences.

Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and Ages & Stages Social Emotional (ASQ: SE)

All children are required to get a developmental and behavioral screening within 45 days of the start of the school year. You will be completing a questionnaire of 10-15 questions regarding your child in developmental and behavioral areas such as small and large muscles, language, self-help, self-regulation, communication, autonomy, and interaction with people. With the results, we can quickly recognize what areas (if any) your child requires assistance with and identify any need for further assessment.

Preparing for a conversation with your child’s teacher

There are several ways that you can prepare for talking with your child’s teacher about your child as a unique individual. Here are some topics to think about at home before you talk with the teacher:

- Things my child does well at home and at school;
- How my child interacts with other children, siblings, or family members; and
- Special health concerns (e.g., allergies).

After thinking about what you may want to talk about, it can also be helpful to collect samples of things your child does at home to show the teacher. Sharing your experiences as a parent when you talk to your child’s teacher helps him/her to learn more about your child. Teachers will likely talk with you about the areas your child is progressing in and the areas in which they may need additional support. Developing an action plan is a good way for you and your child’s teacher to work together to continue communicating about your child’s development. The following planning tools can be used throughout the child’s preschool years to help you prepare for talking with teachers.

Collecting Work from Home

Preparing to Talk With Your Child's Teacher: Collecting Child's Work from Home		
Child's Name: _____ Date: _____ Child's Teacher: _____ Child's Age: _____		
Collecting work your child has completed at home is a good way to prepare to talk with your child's teacher. This can give the teacher insight into how the child is developing at home. Below are some ideas for work to collect from the early learning domains.		
APPROACHES TO LEARNING	SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT/ HEALTH
<input type="checkbox"/> A story about a time when your child completed a task or solved a problem independently	<input type="checkbox"/> Games your child likes to play with siblings, other family members, and friends	<input type="checkbox"/> A list of gross motor (large muscle) skills your child has <input type="checkbox"/> A list of fine motor (small muscle) skills your child has
LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	MATHEMATICAL THINKING	SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> Examples of your child's writing <input type="checkbox"/> A list of new words you have heard your child use in the past few months <input type="checkbox"/> Books your child likes to read with you or others at home	<input type="checkbox"/> A picture of a block building your child created <input type="checkbox"/> A pattern that your child created	<input type="checkbox"/> Predictions or observations your child has made about events or objects
SOCIAL STUDIES	CREATIVE ARTS	OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child's self-portrait or drawing of his/her family	<input type="checkbox"/> Pictures your child has drawn or photos of three-dimensional creations he/she has made	<input type="checkbox"/> Work that best describes your child

Questions to Ask Your Child's Teacher

Key Questions to Ask Your Child's Teacher

Child's Name: _____

Date: _____

Child's Teacher: _____

Child's Age: _____

Approaches to Learning:

Which topics does my child enjoy learning about the most? Which does my child like learning about the least? How do you motivate or encourage my child to enjoy learning? How are you measuring my child's progress throughout the year?

Social and Emotional Development:

How does my child interact with the other children in the classroom? How does my child deal with conflict in the classroom? Is my child the cause of much conflict in the classroom?

Physical Development/Health:

Have you noticed changes in my child's behavior that may be related to physical or health problem? Is my child showing progress with his/her fine motor skills, like using scissors?

Language and Literacy:

How much time does my child spend reading and writing during the day? Does my child have favorite books to read at school?

Mathematical Thinking and Science:

What is my child working on with numbers and counting? How does my child describe the properties of objects and events?

Social Studies:

What kinds of questions does my child ask about the similarities and differences of the classroom community? How does my child describe his/her family and the things that we do at home?

Creative Arts:

What are my child's favorite ways to express himself/herself? What kinds of music and movement does he/she like best in the classroom? What are my child's favorite roles to play when he/she is pretending?

Developing an Action Plan

Developing an Action Plan: Steps for Families and Teachers

Child's Name: _____

Date: _____

Child's Teacher: _____

Child's Age: _____

Developing an action plan is a good way for you and your child's teacher to work together to continue communicating about your child's development. This plan can focus on the developmental areas in which your child is progressing in and the areas in which they may need additional support.

Monitoring Child Progress

In which developmental areas is the child progressing?

In which developmental areas might the child need additional supports?

What can teachers work on at school?

What can families work on at home?

Special Services

Does the child receive any special services at school or outside of school? (e.g. occupational therapy, counseling sessions, speech therapy)

Should the child continue to receive these services? Are there additional services the child may need?

Communication About Child Progress

How will families and teachers continue to communicate about child progress?

When will the next meeting or conversation take place?